

# Standards & Criteria

Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) Designation

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National Council on Family Relations



# Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) Standards & Criteria

## Table of Contents

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### Contents

INTRODUCTION & HISTORY ..... 3

IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION CERTIFICATION..... 4

PURPOSE OF CERTIFICATION ..... 4

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CFLE DESIGNATION ..... 5

LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION – PROVISIONAL AND FULL ..... 5

TWO PATHS TO THE CFLE CREDENTIAL..... 6

    ABBREVIATED APPLICATION PROCESS..... 6

    CFLE EXAM APPLICATION PROCESS ..... 7

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION WORK EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS ..... 8

DURATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION ..... 10

CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR FULL CFLES..... 11

CFLE FEES ..... 11

RECONSIDERATION AND APPEALS PROCESS ..... 12

## **INTRODUCTION & HISTORY**

The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) was established in 1938 as an organization for professionals and others concerned with promoting better family life. Its membership is drawn from anthropology, child development, economics, education, family science, health, history, home economics, family and consumer sciences, law, medicine, nursing, psychology, public policy, religion, social work, and sociology. From the beginning, the NCFR has had a continuing interest in promoting and supporting education for family living.

Family life education is a complex and multi-faceted field that addresses all aspects of family life. The variety and number of disciplines represented in the membership of the Council, and its commitment to improving the quality of individual and family life, made it uniquely qualified to provide leadership in the development of a national system of voluntary certification of family life educators. In 1968, NCFR defined family life education as follows:

*"Family life education has as its primary purpose to help individuals and families learn about human growth, development, and behavior in the family setting and throughout the life cycle. Learning experiences are aimed at developing the potential of individuals in their present and future roles as family members. The core concept is relationships, through which personality develops, about which individuals make decisions to which they are committed, and in which they develop self esteem."*

Family life education (FLE) is the educational effort to strengthen family life through a family perspective. The objective of family life education is to enrich and improve the quality of individual and family life. FLE emphasizes processes to enable people to develop into healthy adults, to help people work together in close relationships, and to facilitate the ability of people to bring out the best in others. While various professionals assist families, it is the family life educator who incorporates a preventive and educational approach to individual and family issues.

Family life education includes knowledge about a broad range of topics including how families function; the inter-relationship of the family and society; human growth and development throughout the life span; both physiological and psychological aspects of human sexuality; the impact of money and time management on daily life; the importance and value of education for parenting; the effects of policy and legislation on families; ethical considerations in professional conduct; and a solid understanding and knowledge of how to teach and/or develop curriculum for what are often sensitive and personal issues.

The desirability of defining the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities of family life educators resulted in the appointment of a task force on family life education in 1968. The National Commission on Family Life Education published its report, "Family Life Education Programs, Principles, Plans, Procedures: A Framework for Family Life Education," in 1968. The Committee on Educational Standards and Certification for Family Life Educators proposed criteria for the education of family and sex education teachers in 1970. In 1978, a Committee on Standards for Family Life Educators reported recommendations to the National Council on Family Relations' membership. Based on this continued concern, and the added impetus from the 1980 White House Conference on Families, the Committee on Standards and Criteria for Certification of Family Life Educators received unanimous approval from the Board of Directors in 1981 to

establish a certification program for professional family life educators. "The College/University Curriculum Guidelines," received final approval in October 1982. "Standards and Criteria for the Certification of Family Life Educators" received final Board approval in October 1982, as did "An Overview of the Content in Family Life Education: A Framework for Planning Programs over the Life Span." The Board of Directors recommended "immediate implementation" of the Certification Program.

The National Council on Family Relations began certifying family life educators through a portfolio review process in 1985. In 1996 they introduced the Academic Program Review and developed an Abbreviated Application process. The Academic Program Review provided university and colleges the opportunity to submit their family degree programs for review by the Academic Program Review Committee. University and college curriculum is reviewed for coverage of the CFLE content. Programs meeting the CFLE criteria are recognized by NCFR as "NCFR-approved programs." Graduates of NCFR-approved programs qualify to apply for the CFLE designation through the Abbreviated Application process (page 6). To-date there are over 100 NCFR-approved programs in the U.S. and Canada.

## **IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION CERTIFICATION**

Certification for family life education is a process by which the professional organization, the National Council on Family Relations, grants recognition to individuals who have met specified qualifications. It is not a certification to teach, but it is a credential indicating expertise in the field of family life education. For those responsible for hiring and evaluating personnel, it is assurance that the designee possesses the professionally recognized knowledge, skills and abilities need to provide quality family life education.

Qualified family life educators are critical to the success of family life education programs. They can be responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of programs. In addition, they often interact directly with program participants. Both professional training and personal experience are essential in the development of a qualified family life educator.

In addition to the preparation and work experience deemed critical, ethical behavior and respect for others are basic personal characteristics of the family life educator. Evidence is sought regarding intellectual and social skills, skills in verbal and written communication, the ability to relate well to groups and with persons on a one-to-one basis in a non-judgmental way, self-confidence, emotional stability, flexibility, maturity, empathy, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, awareness of one's own personal and cultural attitudes and values - especially regarding sexism, racism, ageism, religion, and work. Such evidence is provided through the Employer Assessment Form.

## **PURPOSE OF CERTIFICATION**

It is important to understand that the purpose of certification is to provide assurance to employers and consumers that the designee is qualified to be providing family life education. NCFR does not certify people because they are *doing* family life education, but rather because they are *qualified* to do so. The CFLE application process measures knowledge and understanding in each of the ten family life content areas deemed necessary for effective family life education practice. In addition, applicants must document sufficient work experience in providing family life education in order to receive Full Certification status.

The National Council on Family Relations has identified the following content areas as representing the field of family life education. Applicants pursuing the CFLE credential must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of these ten content areas.

**Family Life Content Areas** (See [FLE Content Areas](#) on the NCFR website for more information on each content area)

- 1) **Families and Individuals in Societal Contexts**
- 2) **Internal Dynamics of Families**
- 3) **Human Growth and Development Across the Life Span**
- 4) **Human Sexuality**
- 5) **Interpersonal Relationships**
- 6) **Family Resource Management**
- 7) **Parent Education and Guidance**
- 8) **Family Law and Public Policy**
- 9) **Professional Ethics and Practice**
- 10) **Family Life Education Methodology**

## **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CFLE DESIGNATION**

All applicants for the Certified Family Life Educator designation must meet the minimum requirement of completion of a baccalaureate or advanced degree from an accredited\* college/university.

\* Accredited means a recognized regional agency for the accreditation of a Baccalaureate Institutions, Acceptable agencies include: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

### **Degrees Earned Outside the United States**

Applicants with a degree earned outside of the United States must provide evidence of degree equivalency to a degree earned in the United States. Credentials should be evaluated by an official credential evaluation service that is a member of the *National Association of Credential Evaluation Services* (NACES). A list of members of NACES can be found at [www.naces.org](http://www.naces.org).

## **LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION**

There are two levels of certification: Provisional and Full.

**Provisional** Certification is available to CFLE applicants who have demonstrated *content knowledge* in each of the ten family life content areas, but have not yet earned sufficient work experience hours in family life education to qualify for **Full** Certification.

**Full** Certification is available to CFLE applicants who have demonstrated content knowledge in each of the ten family life content areas *and* earned and documented sufficient work experience in family life education. The amount of work experience needed is contingent upon the applicability and level of the degree earned (page 9).

Provisional designates who have completed sufficient work experience can upgrade to Full Certification by submitting the **CFLE Work Experience Summary Form - Upgrade** and the **Employer Assessment and Verification Form**, a current Resume or Vita, and supporting documentation. There is an Upgrade Application fee. See <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-fees> for current rates.

## **TWO PATHS TO THE CFLE CREDENTIAL**

The Certified Family Life Educator designation is awarded through two separate paths – the **Abbreviated Application Process** *or* the **CFLE Exam Process**.

### **ABBREVIATED APPLICATION PROCESS**

(Available to graduates of NCFR-Approved Academic Programs)

The National Council on Family Relations' Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) reviews university and college family degree programs and tracks for adherence to the criteria needed for *Provisional* approval as a Certified Family Life Educator. A list of NCFR-approved academic programs is available on the NCFR website at <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/view-all-cfle-degree-programs>. **Applicants who are qualified to apply for CFLE through the Abbreviated Application Process DO NOT have to take the CFLE Exam.**

In order to apply through the Abbreviated Application Process, applicants need to have completed *all* of the courses listed on the checklist of pre-approved courses from their school (<http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/abbreviated-application-process/checklists-ncfr-approved-programs>). Applicants must submit the completed checklist along with the **Abbreviated Application form**, a signed copy of the **CFLE Code of Ethics**, and an *original official* transcript showing *degree completion*. An official transcript will have a watermark or embossment. For NCFR's purposes it does not have to be sealed in an envelope or sent directly from the school. NCFR will not accept photocopied, faxed, or electronically-transmitted transcripts.

Applicants must have received a C- grade or better in order for a course to be accepted. Courses that are audited are not acceptable.

Applicants are allowed to substitute up to two non-NCFR-approved courses for those on the checklist. The substitute course number and title should be noted on the checklist. In addition the applicant must submit a course syllabus for the substitute course so that NCFR can ensure that the course covered the same content as the NCFR-approved course. The substitute course must appear on the transcript. If the course was taken at a school other than the NCFR-approved program the applicant must submit an official transcript from that school.

If an applicant is missing more than two pre-approved courses from the approved checklist they may not apply for the CFLE credential via the Abbreviated Application Process. Instead they would need to take the CFLE exam.

Graduates wishing to use the Abbreviated Application Process must apply within two years of graduation. Applicants wishing to apply for certification more than two years after graduation need to take the CFLE exam in order to receive certification.

### **Fees for the Abbreviated Application Process**

Applicants applying through the Abbreviated Application process must submit the Abbreviated Application fee. See <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-fees> for current rates. **Note: The Abbreviated Application fee is non-refundable.**

### **Submission Deadlines**

Applications can be submitted at any time. There is no specific submission deadline for the Abbreviated Application Process, but the applicant must apply within two years of graduation. Applicants are typically notified of the review decision within 30 days.

## **CFLE EXAM APPLICATION PROCESS**

Candidates who have not recently graduated from an NCFR-Approved Academic Program can attain Certification by completing the CFLE Exam. In order to qualify to sit for the Exam you need to have at least a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college/university.

### **CFLE Examination**

NCFR has developed a standardized examination for awarding the CFLE credential to applicants who have *not* graduated from an NCFR-approved academic program within the past two years.

The Exam consists of 150 multiple-choice questions. Examination scores are reported as a scaled score rather than a raw score (actual number of questions answered correctly). The reporting scale ranges from 0-1000. The minimum passing scaled score (MPSS) will be set at 700. A candidate who achieves a scaled score at or above 700 on an examination will have passed the examination, while a candidate who scores below a 700 will have failed the examination.

The Exam is offered three times each year through computer-based testing at testing centers located throughout the United States and Canada (and several other countries), and through paper and pencil format onsite at the NCFR Conference.

The CFLE Exam Content Outline and CFLE Exam Resources are accessible through the NCFR website at <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-exam-application-process>. Any applicant with a degree from an accredited institution may sit for the CFLE Exam. Applicants with less than the required level of work experience for their degree and level will receive Provisional Certification upon successful completion of the Exam. Provisional Certification is valid for up to five years. A Provisional CFLE can upgrade to Full Certification upon submission of sufficient work experience in family life education. Provisional CFLEs are encouraged to submit upgrade materials during their anniversary month (month in which they first received Provisional Certification) to avoid double payment of the CFLE Annual fee (included in the upgrade fee).

Applicants pursuing Provisional Certification through the CFLE Exam Application Process submit only the **CFLE Exam Application Form**, the **CFLE Code of Ethics**, and an **original official** transcript showing **degree completion**. An official transcript will have a watermark or embossment. For NCFR's purposes it does not have to be sealed in an envelope or sent directly from the school. NCFR will not accept photocopied, faxed, or electronically-transmitted transcripts.



Applicants pursuing Full Certification through the CFLE Exam Application Process submit the above forms as well as the **Work Experience Summary Form – Exam**, the **Employer Assessment and Verification Form**, a current Resume or Vita, and supporting documentation.

### **Fees for the CFLE Exam**

Applicants applying for certification through the CFLE Exam Application Process must submit an application fee. See <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-fees> for current rates. *Note: The CFLE Exam Application fee is non-refundable.*

### **Submission Deadlines**

The CFLE Exam is offered three times each year (March, July and November) via computer-based testing at specified ISO-Quality Testing sites throughout the United States and Canada (and several other countries) <http://www.isoqualitytesting.com/>. Candidates are given login and password information once they have submitted the CFLE Exam Application and been approved to sit for the Exam.

The CFLE Exam is also offered via paper and pencil at the NCFR Annual Conference. Visit the NCFR website for information on testing dates <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-exam-application-process>.

### **Appeal of Eligibility Denials**

An applicant denied eligibility for the exam has 45 days to submit an appeal application to NCFR requesting an appeal of that denial. If an applicant does not submit an appeal application within 45 days, the applicant forfeits any right to an appeal at a later date. There is no additional fee for requesting an appeal.

### **Exam Retake Policy**

You can take the CFLE Exam up to three times in a two year period. There is a Retake fee (visit <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-fees> for more details). You cannot take the CFLE Exam twice within the same testing window.

## **FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION WORK EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Candidates with family-specific degrees:**

Bachelor's degree: (minimum 3,200 hours work experience in family life education)

Master's or PHD degree: (minimum 1,600 hours work experience in family life education)

A family specific degree will typically have the word "family" in the title. A degree without family in the title may be accepted if it can be shown that the degree included coursework specific to *each* of the ten content areas. If you are unsure if your degree would qualify as family-specific, contact the NCFR office.

### **Candidates with non-family specific degrees:**

Minimum 4,800 hours regardless of level of degree. Bachelors, Masters, or PH.D., all require at least 4,800 hours experience in family life education.

Applicants wishing to receive Full certification must submit evidence of sufficient work experience in family life education by completing the **CFLE Work Experience Summary Form** and the **Employer**



**Assessment and Verification Form**, and submitting a current Resume or Vita, and supporting documentation. All Provisional CFLEs must upgrade their designation to Full status within five years of their original certification date.

For more information about documenting work experience, please visit <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/family-life-education-work-experience>.

| CFLE Requirements   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Degree Type   | Provisional Certification                | Full Certification  | Bachelor's Level Degree   | Master's or PH.D. Level   |
| Family Degree from an NCFR-Approved Program* earned within the past two years → | Complete Abbreviated Application Process | Complete Abbreviated Application Process and document FLE work experience hours | Document at least 3,200 hours FLE work experience to qualify for Full Certification | Document at least 1,600 hours FLE work experience to qualify for Full Certification |
| Family Degree from an NCFR-Approved Program earned more than two years ago →    | Complete CFLE Exam                       | Complete CFLE Exam and document FLE work experience hours                       |   |   |
| Family Degree from a non-NCFR-Approved Program →                                |  |   | Document at least 4,800 hours FLE work experience to qualify for Full Certification |   |
| Non-Family Degree →   |  |   |   |   |

\* A current list of NCFR-approved academic programs can be accessed on the NCFR website at <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/view-all-cfle-degree-programs>.

Family life education occurs in a variety of settings and under a multitude of titles. In general NCFR considers family life education to be activities that involve prevention and education for individuals and families that leads to more productive and satisfying living. Family life education work experience can include a variety of activities (paid or unpaid) such as program development, program coordination/administration, program evaluation, needs assessments, marketing of family life education materials and programs, curriculum or resource development, publications, presentations, group facilitation, and community collaboration. In order to consider work experience activities as family life education the work should reflect these criteria:

- The work is educational and preventive in nature, rather than therapeutic
- The work is related to at least one of the ten family life content areas
- The work considers the whole family, even when working only with individuals (i.e., family systems perspective).
- The work reflects a lifespan perspective – childhood, adolescence, adulthood, later adulthood.

- The work includes identified content or a planned curriculum or program.

Volunteer work may be considered but it must be in addition to paid employment and should be supported with training or formal preparation.

Employment is typically demonstrated through curriculum and material development, and the development or presentation of workshops, courses or programs involving life skills; i.e. communication, parenting, financial management, sexuality, etc. Family life education can also involve program administration and policy development. Counseling, therapy, and case management are not typically considered to be family life education. However, counselors, therapists and case managers/social workers can receive the CFLE designation if they can document the preventative and educational nature of their work.

Experience earned before graduation can be used, but the majority of the work experience should be earned post-graduation. Experience earned during an internship can be used but must be supported with other work experiences. Typically, practicum experiences cannot be counted toward work experience.

Applicants who work in a non-traditional family life education setting, but have incorporated family life education methods, and/or a preventive and educational approach into their work, should provide clarification as to how this is done. An example might be someone who works in a nursing home and has developed a series of classes and support materials for residents and family members about coping with change, making decisions, and/or managing assets.

### **Documentation of Work Experience**

When documenting work experience, provide job descriptions, course descriptions or syllabi for courses taught, brochures or correspondence for seminars presented, etc. If you have written a book or article, provide a copy of the article if fewer than five pages, an abstract, or the book's table of contents. Do not send entire books or lengthy articles.

## **DURATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION**

Certification shall be valid for a period of five years from the date of original certification.

**Full Certification** must be maintained by fulfilling the following requirements:

1. Payment of the required CFLE Annual fee. The fee covers the cost of the CFLE newsletter, *Network*, access to the Professional Resource Library (<http://www.ncfr.org/professional-resource-library>), the CFLE listerv, the CFLE LinkedIn group, and general maintenance and promotion of the program.
2. Submission of the required continuing education credits every five years (page 11).
3. Payment of the **Recertification Fee** upon submittal of continuing education credits.

**Provisional Certification** must be maintained through payment of the required CFLE Annual fee. Provisional designates must upgrade to Full Certification status within five years of approval.

NCFR shall issue dated seals (2013/2014, etc.) to the designee during each of the five years. The dated seals shall be issued only upon receipt of the annual CFLE Annual fee for placement on the CFLE certificate. Seals are mailed the month after payment is received.

The CFLE Annual fee must be paid on an annual basis to avoid forfeiting the certification designation. If, after notification, this fee remains unpaid, the designation will be forfeited. Certification can be reinstated at any time. See page 12 for more details about reinstatement.

The application materials for CFLEs who have forfeited their designation will remain on file at NCFR for three years from the forfeiture date. After that time, NCFR reserves the right to discard the application materials.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR FULL CFLES**

Certification of the family life educator by NCFR is in effect for a period of five years. At the end of that time, the Certified Family Life Educator with Full Certification status must fulfill the following requirements to renew certification:

- Document and submit evidence of participation in professional growth and development activities related to family life education, which continue to fulfill the standards established by NCFR. These activities should go beyond the requirements of normal employment and be earned in two of the three areas: academic preparation, professional development, and/or work experience. A minimum of 100 contact hours (60 minutes each) over the five-year period is required.
- Submission of the Recertification Fee (<http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-fees>).
- Upon receipt and review of continuing education credits, and submission of the recertification fee, the designee will be re-certified for an additional five year period. This recertification is contingent upon payment of the CFLE Annual fee.
- Recertification can be denied if the necessary 100 contact hours have not been accrued. Upon denial of recertification, the applicant may request reconsideration of the decision.
- Upon payment of the currently established recertification fee and subject to meeting the requirements for maintaining certification, the applicant shall be issued a new certificate. The NCFR Certification Department shall continue to issue dated seals to the designee during the next five-year period of certification thereby signifying continuation of certification. The dated seal shall be issued only upon receipt of the CFLE Annual fee.
- Certification will be forfeited if documentation of continuing education credits is not submitted to NCFR headquarters by the due date. Extensions may be granted but must be requested in writing to the Director of Education.
- Content Areas for Continuing Education – The content areas in which credit for continuing education may be received are the same as those established for the certification program:

Families and Individuals in Societal Contexts ● Internal Dynamics of Families ● Human Growth and Development Across the Life Span ● Human Sexuality ● Interpersonal Relationships ● Family Resource Management ● Parent Education and Guidance ● Family Law and Public Policy ● Professional Ethics and Practice ● Family Life Education Methodology.

Continuing education activity is required in at least two of the ten content areas. It is not necessary to have continuing education activity in all ten content areas. Additional information on continuing education requirements will be sent to the designee upon approval of certification and is also available on the NCFR website at <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/maintaining-your-certification>. It is the CFLE's responsibility to keep track of their recertification date.

## **CFLE FEES**

Information about the CFLE fees can be found on the NCFR website: <http://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/cfle-fees>.

Fee payment is due before application, upgrade, or recertification materials can be reviewed. The fee amounts cover the review of materials and the CFLE Annual fee for that year. Please note that the review fees are non-refundable.

### **\*NCFR Membership**

You do not have to be a member of the National Council on Family Relations in order to apply for or maintain certification. However, members of NCFR pay a lower rate for certification than non-members. There are several NCFR membership categories available. All categories qualify for the member discount with the exception of the Organizational category. A CFLE applicant must be an individual member of NCFR rather than a member through an organization in order to receive the NCFR membership discount on the CFLE Application fee.

### **Reinstatement of the CFLE designation after Forfeiture**

The CFLE designation will be forfeited under the following conditions:

- 1) Non-payment of the CFLE Annual fee.
- 2) Failure to submit continuing education credits and the Recertification fee every five years.
- 3) For Provisional CFLEs, failure to submit evidence of sufficient work experience at the end of the five year Provisional period.

Certification can be reinstated within two years of forfeiture by paying any due fees. Forfeited CFLEs wishing to reinstate more than two years later would need to pay a Reinstatement fee and submit any continuing education/work experience materials and fees, if they are due. Forfeited CFLEs should contact the NCFR office to ensure they are paying the correct fees and submitting the proper materials.

### **Request for Reconsideration or Appeal**

Any applicant who has been denied certification or recertification may request reconsideration in writing to the Chair of the CFLE Advisory Board, c/o the Director of Education. This letter must state the reason(s) why the applicant believes the decision is inappropriate and may include any additional information, which the applicant believes may show his/her qualifications to be adequate. The request must be made within one year from the date of the notice to the applicant of the denial. Members of the CFLE Advisory Board will be responsible for conducting a review of the request and making a determination.

Reconsideration of the request shall occur at the next regular meeting of the CFLE Advisory Board after the applicant has submitted the request for reconsideration.

If, after reconsideration of the candidate's materials, the CFLE Advisory Board members again deny certification or recertification, the CFLE Advisory Board shall inform the applicant of this decision. This notice shall be timely and by letter. The letter shall:

- a. State the reason(s) for the CFLE Advisory Board's decision.
- b. Advise the applicant of the right to appeal.

No appeal may be filed unless the applicant has first completed the reconsideration process.

## Appeals Process

Any applicant who chooses to appeal the decision of the CFLE Advisory Board following completion of the reconsideration process set forth in part A of Section IV must inform the Chair of the CFLE Advisory Board in writing of intent to appeal, within 30 days of the receipt of the letter denying certification or recertification.

The appellant shall have the right to appear in person before the CFLE Advisory Board, and/or to submit evidence, including oral testimony, and to be represented by legal counsel, if desired.

The appellant shall be notified by the Chair of the CFLE Advisory Board in writing, at least four weeks in advance of the meeting at which the appeal will be heard.

If the appellant is to be represented by legal counsel, the CFLE Advisory Board Chair shall be notified, in writing, at least two weeks in advance of the committee meeting.

Meetings of the CFLE Advisory Board shall, as a general rule, be closed meetings except when the appellant whose case is being considered requests, in writing, that said meeting be open.

All decisions of the CFLE Advisory Board shall be by majority vote and are final.

The appellant may challenge the specific composition of the CFLE Advisory Board on grounds of conflict of interest in a specific case by writing to the President of NCFR.

## Questions?

If you have any questions regarding the CFLE program or the application process, contact Maureen Bourgeois at 888-781-9331, or via email at [maureenbourgeois@ncfr.org](mailto:maureenbourgeois@ncfr.org). Information on NCFR and the CFLE program is also available on the NCFR website at [www.ncfr.org](http://www.ncfr.org).